

564 servants, nowadays [20] collectively called Amba-
 794 lavasis. The highest of these were the Chakk-
 yars or reciters of Puranic stories, and the
 Pushpagans or flower-gatherers for temples.

[611] These two castes had a patrilineal descent-sys-
 tem of the same type as Nambudiris, and are
 said to have once been Nambudiris who were
 degraded for ritual offences. They ranked be-
 low Nambudiris and above Nayars and the matri-
 lineal temple servant castes. These latter in-
 533 cluded Nambyars, a small caste whose work was
 to accompany Chakkyar recitations on a metal
 drum; Psharodis and Variyars, both of whom
 traditionally sweep the temple, clean temple
 vessels and make garlands for the idols; Pudu-
 vals or drummers on a drum called maddalam;
 and Marars or regular drummers on another
 drum called chenda.

The temple-servant castes were small and
 were chiefly congregated in villages owned by
 Nambudiri landlords or by large temples. Four
 main types of temple were owned by the higher
 castes of Malabar. First came large and weal-
 thy temples owned and managed entirely by
 groups of Nambudiri landlords and dedicated to
 one of the orthodox Brahmanical male deities of
 India, usually Siva or Vishnu. Second came the
 private temple of each individual Nambudiri fam-
 ily in villages owned by Nambudiris; these were
 small replicas of the first type, dedicated to the
 same types of deities. Third came the large
 temples, one of which was associated with each
 574 royal and chiefly matrilineage. These were
 usually dedicated to Bhagavadi or Bhadrakali,
 the Nayar goddess of war, small pox and the soil.

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showered on it, and it is often garlanded. Incantations and *mantras* are recited by the priest during the ceremony.

Bell-metal oil lamps are lit in front of the images and their number is usually 3, 5 or 7. In each lamp there are 5 to 7 wicks pointing in different directions. Only coco-nut oil or *ghee* is used in these ceremonial lamps. In front of these lamps are placed three banana leaves with the cut end of the leaf facing the image and the tip pointing away from it, facing north or east. On one of the leaves some uncooked rice is placed and a husked coco-nut is kept over it, while in the other leaf unhusked paddy is heaped with a coco-nut placed on it. The eyes of the coco-nut are away from the snake idol and are towards the tip of the banana leaf. On the third leaf are placed a few small bananas of a special variety called *hadali*, because *hadali* is referred to in the Vedas.

The boiled rice offering is then placed near the shrine and some money is offered to the idol by dropping it in the oil of the lamp. These preparations are offered to the snake god who is supposed to partake of them. Thereafter the *prasad* or the offering is distributed among the members of the family, and the priest gets half of it. The *prasad* must not be eaten by a crow or dog as this is a bad omen. After the worship, the contents of the leaves are given to the priest who therefore takes great pains to see that this particular ceremony is well conducted.

Once a month or once every three months, low caste Hindus called Pulluvans visit the houses which have snake shrines. Usually they come on Tuesdays or Fridays, and they sing songs in praise of the snake gods. This is done in a rather crude manner to the accompaniment of crude single-stringed instruments called *veena kunj*. For this invocation, an oil lamp is lit before the shrine, and the above-mentioned three banana leaves and their respective contents are placed before the image of the serpent. Usually a woman accompanies the male singer and joins in the chorus, playing the while upon a crude drum. After the praise has been adequately rendered, the ceremony is brought to a close and the musician gets his share of money and materials. This ceremony is meant to propitiate and

and other female friends of the girl then approach, and give sweetmeats to the couple. The girl then serves food to the boy, and after taking their meals together from the same leaf, they proceed to the pandal, where a cloth is severed into two parts, and each part given to the Manavālan and girl separately in the presence of Enangans and other friends. The severing of the cloth is supposed to constitute a divorce." [586]

If, as has been said, the "pattu" sung by the Brāhmani, in "*Rig Vēdaswaram*" is in substitution for the Vēdas sung at the Nambūtiri's wedding—because the Vēdas cannot be used by any but Brāhmans—this part of the ceremonial seems to indicate imitation of the Nambūtiris. The Brāhmani is not however a "Brāhman lady" but merely represents one. In North Malabar she is of the Nambisan caste. [533]

The ceremony is much more analogous to that obtaining in the Bellary district and round about it, through which women, called Basivis, are, after an initiatory ceremony of devotion to a deity, compelled (under certain conditions) to follow no rule of chastity, but whose children are under no degradation, than to the initiation of the Dēvadāsi in her career of harlotry.* It must be said, however, that the ceremony, more especially as modified by poor people, when the Manavālan is represented by a clay figure adorned with flowers, the handiwork of the girl's mother, looks very like it. But what demands consideration now is the position of Manavālan to the bride. Does the ceremony confer on him any of the rights of a husband? There is much diversity of opinion on the point. Some say it does, while some say it does not. It seems certain that, as a rule, there can be no cohabitation between the two as a mere corollary of the tāli-tying ceremony. Should there be three girls in a family, i.e., in the same taravād house, aged, say, 9, 5 and 3, the ceremony is always done for all three at the same time. The only condition as to age of the girl is that the ceremony must be done before she reaches puberty. The bridegroom (to call him so) is selected after consulting agreement between his horoscope and the girl's. He is seated beside her in the marriage pandal, and he invests her with the tāli. They eat of the same plantain leaf (used as a plate throughout Malabar). They are placed in the same chamber, to go through the fiction [171] [735] [184] [824] [415]

* An account of the Basivis, their devotion to deities, etc., by the writer will be found in the "Journal of the Anthropological Society of Bombay," Vol. II., 6 (1891). [113]

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564 sword. The goldsmith has some responsibility connected with the sword, perhaps on account of its ornamentation, although the ordinary Malayali blacksmith is quite equal to the ordinary work of a goldsmith as well as repairing clocks and watches. Following comes the Arayân with the silver umbrella to an accompaniment of very noisy drumming; he and his umbrella in great state under a canopy of red cloth held lengthways by two men, one before, one behind. The procession of Bhagavati continues throughout the night, and ceases at day-break. These six days of the festival are called Vilakku.

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A word about the drumming. The number of instrumentalists increases as the festival goes on, and on the last day I counted over fifty, all Nâyars. The instruments were the ordinary tom-tom, a skin stretched tight over one side of a circular wooden band, about $1\frac{1}{2}$ feet in diameter and 2 or 3 inches in width, and the common long drum much narrower at the ends than in the middle, and there were (I think) a few of those narrow in the middle, something like an hour-glass cut short at both ends. They are beaten with drum-sticks, curved, not straight, thicker at the end held in the hand. The accuracy with which they were played on, never a wrong stroke, was truly amazing, although the rhythm was being changed perpetually; and their crescendo and diminuendo, from a perfect fury of wildness to the gentlest pianissimo, was equally astonishing, especially when we consider the fact that there was no visible leader of this strange orchestra.

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Early on the seventh and last day, when the morning procession is over, there comes to the temple a man of the Pânan* caste. He carries a small cadjan umbrella which he has made himself, adorned all round the edges with a fringe of the young leaves of the cocoanut palm. His approach is heralded and noised just as in the case of the others on the previous day. The umbrella he brings should have a long handle and with this umbrella in his hand he performs a dance before the temple. The Malabar umbrella has a very long handle as a rule, in fact the correct way to carry an umbrella is with the end of the handle resting in the hand while the arm is straight at the side.

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The temple which is figured in the plate² is situated within a hollow square enclosure, which none in caste

* Pânan, a caste numerically small, and inferior. They make umbrellas of cadjan and perform at temples.

² [See Plate XII, facing p. 252, Category 116--Analyst]

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the chief priest dons a red silk cloth and takes in his hand a chopper-like sword in shape something like a small bill-hook—while the goats are taken to a certain room within the temple. This room is rather a passage than a room as there are to it but two walls, running north and south. The goats are made to stand in turn in the middle of this room, facing to the south; the chief priest stand to the east of a goat facing west as he cuts off its head with the chopper. He never ceases his mantrams and the goats never flinch,—the effect of the mantrams! Several cocks are then sacrificed in the same place, and over the carcasses of goats and cocks there is sprinkled charcoal powder mixed in water (karutta gursi) and saffron powder and lime water (chukanna gursi), the flow of mantrams never ceasing the while. The three Müssads only see the sacrifice, a part of the rite supremely secret. Equally so is that which follows. The carcass of one goat will be taken out of the temple by the northern door to the north side of the temple; and from this place one of the temple servants, *who is blind-folded*, drags it three times round the temple, the Müssads following closely repeating their mantrams, the drummer in front beating his drum softly with his fingers. The drummer dare not look behind him and does not know what is being done. After the third round the drummer and the temple servant go away and the three Müssads cook some of the flesh of the goats and one or two of the cocks (or a part of one) with rice. This rice when cooked is taken to the kâvu (grove), to the north of the temple, and there the Müssads again ply their mantrams. As each mantram is ended a handful of saffron powder is flung on the rice, and all the time the drummer who by this time has returned, the only one present with the priests, keeps up an *obligato pianissimo* with his drum, using his fingers: he faces the north and the priests face the south. Presently, having done with the mantrams, the priests run (*not walk*) once round the temple carrying the cooked rice and scattering it wide as they go, repeating their mantrams. They enter the temple and remain within until day-break. No one can leave the temple until morning comes. Before daybreak the temple is thoroughly swept and cleaned, and then the Müssads go out and the five Nambûtiris again enter before sunrise and perform the ordinary worship thrice in the day. For this one day only. The next morning the Müssad priests return and resumé their duties.

776 shape. It is overgrown with trees of various kinds, and shrubs,
 778 and sometimes medicinal plants also. In the middle of this
 quasi-circular shrine images usually made of laterite after
 specified shapes are arranged in certain established methods and
 a passage is opened to the seat of these images from outside.
 This spot is so scrupulously reserved, that not even domestic
 animals are allowed to stray therein. No trees from the place
 are to be felled down, nor any plant whatever for that matter
 with any metal or more particularly iron weapons; for these
 are unholy things, the introduction alone of which inside the
 sanctified area, not to say the actual cutting down of the tree, is
 regarded as exceedingly distasteful to these serpent gods. They
 [564] are not to be desecrated by the touch or even by the approach of
 [793] a low-caste man. Once in every year at least poojah offerings
 [782] are made to these gods through the medium of the Numbôdri
 priests.

796 "Periodical ceremonies called Pāmbantullel are performed to
 propitiate them. These are resorted to only on special occasions
 776 for the purpose of averting serious visitations from the family.
 782 The ceremony is a long complicated process. Any individual
 drawn from among the Nairs themselves is capable of acting the
 part of priests on these occasions. A day is fixed for the opening
 of the ceremony; and a particular plot of ground in the house
 yard is cleansed and preserved for the performance of the poojahs
 [532] incidental to the ceremony. Then on the spot certain square
 figures are drawn, one inside another, and these are tastefully
 diversified by the interpolation of circular figures and others
 inside and about them, based on geometrical principles. A
 peculiar symmetry is observed in the matter of these figures.
 The figures used in the drawings are usually of various colours,
 red, white, black and others. Ordinary rice-flour, then again
 such flour mixed with a combination of chunnam and turmeric
 powder, thereby making the flour pure red, and burnt paddy husk
 are chiefly employed. Then a number of other accessories are
 also required for the ceremony in the shape of lamps, cocoanuts,
 eatables of various sorts prepared from paddy and rice and some
 other cooked things, such as rice, bread made of rice, and others.
 [533] These are properly arranged in the place and poojah is offered
 by the priest with the slow recitation of *mantrams*, and some holy
 songs or ballads in memory of these gods. Then a number of
 Nair women, with perfect purity and cleanliness of person are
 seated close to each other in a row or two. These women are to
 preserve sanctity and purity of their persons by a total abstinence
 from animal food, intoxicants and anything else of an exciting
 nature for a prescribed period of time; and it is only after the
 lapse of this period that they become worthy of being admitted to

this ceremony. Thus having purged their bodies of all worldliness they are taken into the ceremony and are seated as described before. Now by means of the *mantrams* and poojah the serpent gods are propitiated and in consequence they manifest themselves in the bodies of these female representatives of theirs. The entrance of the gods into their bodies is characterised by a fearful concussion of their whole frame, gradually developing into a ceaseless, shaking, particularly the upper parts. A few minutes afterwards, they begin to speak one by one and their speeches are regarded as expressions of the god's will. Sometimes the gods appear in the bodies of all these females and sometimes only in those of a select few or none at all. The refusal of the gods to enter into such persons is symbolical of some want of cleanliness and purity in them; which contingency is looked upon as a source of anxiety to the individual. It may also suggest the displeasure of these gods towards the family in respect of which the ceremony is performed. In either case, such refusal on the part of the gods is an index of their ill-will or dissatisfaction. In cases where the gods refuse to appear in any one of those seated for the purpose, the ceremony is prolonged until the gods are so properly propitiated as to constrain them to manifest themselves. Then after the lapse of the number of days fixed for the ceremony and after the will of the serpent gods is duly expressed the ceremonies close.

"One other small item of offering to these gods consists in certain ballads sung by the Pulluvar females going about from house to house at stated seasons of the year. They take a pretty large pitcher, close its opening by means of a small circular piece of thin leather which is fastened on to the vessel by means of strings strongly tied round its neck. Another string is adjusted to the leather cover which when played on by means of the fingers, produces a hoarse note which is said to please the god's ears, pacify their anger and lull them into sleep. This vessel is carried from house to house in the day time by these Pulluvar females; and placing the vessel in a particular position on the ground, and sitting in a particular fashion in relation to the vessel, they play on the string which then produces a very pleasing musical note. Then they sing ballads to the accompaniment of these notes. After continuing this for sometime they stop, and getting their customary dues from the family, go their own way. It is believed that these notes and the ballads are peculiarly pleasing to the serpent gods, who bless those for whose sakes the music has been rendered. In consequence of the halo of sanctity that has been popularly thrown round the serpent it is considered a sin of a most heinous nature to kill one of these deified reptiles. The killing of a cobra is regarded with the utmost concern amongst us. In such case the carcase is taken and duly burned with all

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"Immediately the day dawns the heads of the families give to almost all the junior members and servants of the household and to wives and children, money-presents varying from 4 as. to a rupee or two. Children preserve these presents to serve as their pocket money. In the more numerically large families similar presents are also made by the heads of particular branches of the same family to their juniors, children, wives and servants. These presents are intended to be the forerunners of incomes to them more splendid all the year round. 796 431

"But one other item connected with the festival deserves mention. On the evening of the previous day, about four or five o'clock most well-to-do families distribute paddy or rice, as the case may be, in varying quantities with some other accessories to the family-workmen, whether they live on the family-estates or not. In return for this, these labourers bring with them for presentation the fruits of their own labours such as vegetables of divers sorts, cocoanut oil, jaggery, plantains, pumpkins, cucumbers, brinjals, &c., in ways such as their respective circumstances might permit. 556 466 431 796

"With the close of the noon-meal the festival practically concludes, and nothing remains of it for the next day or for the same evening, for that matter. In some families after the noon-meals are over, dancing and games of various kinds are carried on, which contribute to the enhancement of the pleasures incidental to the festival. As on other prominent occasions, card-playing and other games are also resorted to." 796 535 526 524

"THE THIRUVATHIRA FESTIVAL.

"Thiruvathira is one of the three great national occasions of Malabar. It generally comes off in the Malayalam month of Dhanu (December or January) on the day called the Thiruvathira day. It is essentially a festival in which females are almost exclusively concerned and lasts for but a single day. The popular conception of it is that it is in commemoration of the death of Kamadevan, the Cupid of our national mythology. As recorded in the old Puranas, Kamadevan was destroyed in the burning fire of the third eye of Siva, one of the chief members of our Divine Trinity. Hence he is now supposed as having only an ideal or rather spiritual existence, and thus he exerts a powerful influence upon the lower passions of human nature. The memory of this unhappy tragedy is still kept alive amongst us, particularly the female section, by means of the annual celebration of this important festival. About a week before the day, the festival practically opens. At about 4 in the morning every young female member of Nair families with pretensions to decency, gets out of her bed and takes her bath in a tank. Usually, a fairly large number of these young ladies collect themselves in 776 713 515 533

796 the tank for the purpose. Then all or almost all of these plunge
 533 in the water and begin to take part in the singing that is pre-
 [515] sently to follow. One of these then leads off by means of a
 peculiar rhythmic song chiefly pertaining to Cupid. This singing
 is simultaneously accompanied by a curious sound produced
 with her hand on the water. The palm of the left hand is closed
 and kept immediately underneath the surface of the water. Then
 the palm of the other is forcibly brought down in a slanting
 direction and struck against its surface. So that the water is
 completely ruffled and is splashed in all directions producing a
 loud deep noise. This process is continuously prolonged
 together with the singing. One stanza is now over along with
 the sound and then the leader stops a while for the others to
 follow her in her wake. This being likewise over, she caps her
 first stanza, with another at the same time beating on the water
 and so on until the conclusion of the song. Then all of them
 make a long pause and then begin another. The process goes on
 until the peep of dawn when they rub themselves dry and come
 home to dress themselves in the neatest and grandest possible
 attire. They also darken the fringes of their eyelids with a sticky
 preparation of soot mixed up with a little oil or ghee; and
 sometimes with a superficial coating of antimony powder. They
 also wear white, black, or red marks lower down the middle of
 their foreheads close to the part where the two eyebrows near one
 another. They also chew betel and thus redden their mouths
 and lips. Then they proceed to the enjoyment of another
 [526] prominent item of pleasure, viz., swinging to and fro, on what is
 usually known as an Uzhinjal.*

796 "On the festival day after the morning bath is over, they
 264 take a light meal and in the noon the family-dinner is voraciously
 262 attacked; the essential and almost universal ingredients of which
 [535] being ordinary ripe plantain fruits and a delicious preparation
 of arrow-root powder purified and mixed with jaggery or sugar
 and also cocoanut. Then till evening dancing and merry-making
 are ceaselessly indulged in.

796 "The husband population are inexcusably required to be
 [538] present in the wives' houses before evening as they are bound
 to do on the Onam and Vishu occasions; failure to do which is
 looked upon as a step or rather the first step on the part of the
 defaulting husband towards a final separation or divorce from the
 [132] wife. Despite the rigour of the bleak December season during
 [515] which commonly the festival falls, heightened inevitably by the
 constant blowing of the cold east wind upon their moistened
 frames, these lusty maidens derive considerable pleasure from
 their early baths and their frolics in water. The biting cold of

* A swing made of bamboo.

Tiyyar

[South Malabar and Cochin]

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613 must be unrelated: if a man married an *enagar* woman, the *enagar* bond was broken and each lineage must find new, unrelated *enagar*. *Enagar* must be present to witness marriages, to help at funerals, and to represent their lineage's ancestral spirits in the ceremonial food-offerings to spirits on the sixteenth day after, or the anniversary of, a death. The prohibition on marriages between *enagar* acts as an insurance that the *enagar* should not be prejudiced by ties of matrilineal or affinal kinship in their task of bringing to justice members of the linked lineage who offended against caste law. Among Nayars, this was less likely to happen because patrilineal ties were less strong than are matrilineal ties among Tiyyars.

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[965] Cutting across their lineage-grouping, the Tiyyars had dispersed, exogamous matrilineal clans, comparable with the clans of the north. My informants knew nothing about these clans except that they were once exogamous. They are not so today, since some people do not remember their clan-names. Though the clans have died out, marriage is prohibited between known matrilineal kin.

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582 The Tiyyars of this area had fraternal polyandry. In this they must be distinguished from the Nayars, since the Tiyyars banned non-fraternal polyandry, while the Nayars of Malabar and Cochin forbade the marriage of one woman to two men of the same lineage, not to mention the same sibling-group. Tiyyar fraternal polyandry died out about twenty years ago. To carry out this marriage, the horoscopes of the girl and the eldest potential husband were compared and the amount of the dowry of jewels and vessels fixed. The bridegrooms went to the girl's house with their kin and *enagar*. Their mother's brother handed clothing for the bride, together with the *kdnam* sum as in Northern Malabar, to the mother's brother of the bride. A learned man sang a marriage formula to the effect that the girl of such a lineage was here given to the men of such a lineage, with caste-men and the sacred lamp as witness. He adjured the bridegroom's party to punish her reasonably when necessary, but to 'Keep her well, but if you are displeased with her, bring her back to us even if she has ten children, and we shall have her back, after settling the accounts in the presence of the third man [the go-between in marriage arrangements] and the *enangan*.' The bride was seated in the marriage hall at the end of a row beside her bridegrooms. The bridegroom's mother and other kinsfolk, and finally their *enangan* and his wife, fed the grooms and then the bride with porridge and with coconut-milk.

[533] The marriage was consummated shortly afterwards in the bride's house, where each husband in order of age went to live with her for one or two weeks. At the end of the honeymoon period she was brought permanently to the husband's house, where she became her mother-in-law's subordinate. The husbands cohabited with her for equal periods in turn by the arrangement of their mother. Even a child might be married to the common wife by the milk-tie, and when he grew up claim conjugal rights in his much older wife. If the family were large and the wife weak in health, a second and even a third woman might, at least in modern times, be married by all the brothers and shared as their common wife. Children called all the fathers *appan*, prefacing distinguishing terms. Sons had equal rights of inheritance. The system mitigated against division of property, but, at least in modern times, if the family became large, brothers might, on the death of their fathers, divide the property and the children and each take one of the wives to live with him in middle life.

[606] Divorce is permitted: a divorced wife returns to her brother's house, whence she may in theory be remarried. To effect a divorce, the eldest husband traditionally took a piece of thread from his loin-cloth, burnt it in two, and blew the two pieces away, saying to the brother of the girl, 'Here is your sister's *achdram*.' *Achdram* commonly means 'custom', and Aiyappan (1944, p. 184), interprets the phrase, 'Hereby the "thread-tie" [formed by presenting a loin-cloth to the wife at marriage] is snapped, and with it my customary rights over this woman as her husband terminate.' The earnest money was returned to the husband's kin in the

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Nayar
Tiyyar

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sambandham lover he came in a different role. Among South Malabar Tiyyars the prospective husband might tie the *Mli*. But in this case, too, his roles were kept separate: the post-puberty marriage rites must be gone through if the bridegroom (with his brothers) became permanently married to the girl. In any case the ritual bridegroom was usually a small boy; this is the important point here. Among North Malabar Tiyyars a potential mother-in-law tied the *Mli*, or else the barber woman, though in this ceremony the barber is protagonist in the rites marking the girl's passage to womanhood. In the higher matrilineal castes, and among North Malabar Tiyyar barbers, the rite is performed by an elder of high rank. Among North Malabar Nayars, however, the lower caste Marar drummers (who, like the barber for Tiyyars, conduct Nayar funeral rites) play a role suspiciously like secondary bridegrooms, since they place ornaments on the girl's arms and address her for the first time as a married woman, before the *Mli* is tied.

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My hypothesis is that in all these cases the choice of *tdli-tier* indicates, on the part of men of the society, a general, unconscious fear of deflowering women. Barbosa (Stanley tr. 1866, p. 7) gives us a clue to this when he says that even after the *tdli-rite*, Nayar mothers went 'begging some young men to deflower the girl, for among themselves they hold it an unclean thing and almost a disgrace to deflower women'. Castenada (Kerr ed. 1911), similarly reports that in the Zamorin's family the girl's kindred 'send for a young man of the Nayar caste out of the kingdom, and give him presents to induce him to initiate the young virgin, after which he hangs a jewel round her neck. . . . Even for the Zamorin's sisters, therefore, the 'initiator' 's role was unpopular: he must be induced with gifts to fulfil it. Hamilton (1727, p. 174) notes that the 'Nambourie or chief priest' must deflower the Zamorin's Nayar mistress (presumably at the *tdli-rite*) before the Zamorin could cohabit with her, and that 'some of the Nobles are so complaisant as to allow the Clergy the same Tribute'. That the Nambūdiris' privilege was not one exacted under protest from the Nayars, but willingly accorded, appears from his remark that 'the common people cannot have that compliment paid to them, but are forced to supply the Priest's place themselves'.

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The unwillingness to deflower a woman is explained on the grounds that it is a 'disgrace' and an 'unclean thing'. Here, evidently, is the clue to why the North Malabar Tiyyar *tdli* was tied by a barber woman, and the rites symbolizing defloration, or perhaps conferring fertility on the woman, performed by a barber man. Tiyyar barbers, like their washermen, pollute Tiyyars and may not ordinarily touch them. Both castes attend at the real first menstruation of a North Malabar Tiyyar girl, where the barber man and barber woman perform ceremonies similar to those of the mock menstrual seclusion before the *tdli-rite*. The Tiyyar washerwoman must at all times supply the girl with a lower cloth (*matu*, 'change') in which to bathe on the fourth morning of menstruation. She supplies this cloth also for the bath after the mock seclusion before the *tdli-rite*. At the real puberty-rites, however, it is the headman of the washerman caste, and not a woman, who hands the clean loin-cloth on the third night to kinswomen of the girl, after singing a song designed to enhance her fertility.

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The role of the washerman as a man associated with the fertility of women appears again in the first menstruation ceremony of South Malabar Nayars. Though the Nayar washerman washes ordinary cloths for Nayars, the lower caste, Tiyyar washermen (*Maanan*) provides the clean loin-cloth for bathing after menstruation and child-birth. At the Nayar puberty-rites, after the ceremonial bath on the fourth morning, the eldest washerman stands on the verandah and instructs the girl, who sits before him within the house, to make an offering with rice and coconuts to the sacred household lamp. While the natal kinsmen of the girl hide themselves on the back verandah (a place usually occupied by women) a group of washermen assemble on the front verandah and sing vulgar songs relating to sexual intercourse before the girl and her kinswomen, with a view to enhancing her fertility. At the end, her mother pays the head washerman the cloth which the girl has worn to cover her head and face.

Nayyar
Tiyyar

FEMALE INITIATION RITES ON THE MALABAR COAST

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pays the head washerman the cloth which the girl has worn to cover her head and face.

It seems that in this offering to the household lamp (as in the Tiyyar girl's offering to the lamp and the marriage-pole in North Malabar, when she is instructed by the barber) the washerman stands as a kind of bridegroom to the girl, as he does also by singing songs to increase her fertility (see Freud 1919, ch. 3; Radcliffe-Brown 1939).¹ In some areas of North Malabar the barber, too, sings songs at the *Idli*-rite to increase the fertility of the girl, but I do not know whether these are obscene. In any case, both barber and washermen stand in a special relation of intimacy to the girl during and immediately after her first menstrual pollution, and the barber has the same role during the mock menstrual seclusion before the *Idli*-rite and at the rites representing ceremonial defloration which follow this seclusion.

Why, if it is in some circumstances a ritually polluting act, worthy of a low caste man, symbolically to deflower a woman, do the Nayars and Kshattriyas call holy men of higher caste, and the North Malabar Tiyyar barbers, a respected elder of their community, to tie a woman's *Idli*? This becomes intelligible when we remember that ritual purity and pollution are the positive and negative aspects of a condition best described as *sacer*, supernaturally dangerous or valuable, the reverse of the profane.² In South India, a host of situations illustrate this dual nature of the 'sacred' as potentially polluting or potentially unusually pure. Thus faeces and urine are normally ritually polluting, yet the dung and urine of the sacred cow (a mother symbol) are eaten or sprinkled to purify oneself of the pollutions of death, of birth or of sin. The virgin, then, in these castes is sacred: it is ritually dangerous to take her virginity. My hypothesis is that this is so because the virgin is unconsciously associated with the mother, as a woman whom it is desirable to approach sexually but who may not be approached, because of the threat of castration or murder by a male parental figure (originally the father and, in the matrilineal castes, the mother's brother). I think that this is so because the virgin is still in the possession of her own jealous natal kinsmen, who own, though they may not use, her sexuality. She is, therefore, feared by men of her own age-group, who feel that it is the place of some father-figure (unconsciously, their own father or mother's brother) to take her virginity. A father-figure common to the whole society is therefore summoned, symbolically (and sometimes actually) to deflower the girl, release her, in respect of her sexuality, from the ownership of her natal kinsmen, and leave her, divorced on the fourth day, as a normal mature woman who 'may now do what she pleases'.

In the higher matrilineal castes the bridegroom has all the attributes of a father to the Nayar community. When the *desavar* ties the *Idli*, he is a father-figure to the village as a whole: in some villages he even has the title of *acchan* ('father'). The *nddavar* is a father-surrogate to the *desavaris*, and the king, to the *nddavaris*. The Nambudiris are 'fathers' to the whole Nayar and Kshattriya community, being the greatest landowners, the highest in ritual

¹ This impression of the washerman as symbolic bridegroom was strengthened by an incident in Palakkad. Five years previously, a Nayar girl of eleven in a family of newcomers had menstruated before her *Idli* was tied. Fearing neighbourly disapproval, her mother called the low caste washerman (Mannan) to the house and paid him to tie the girl's *Idli*, on the third day while she was still in menstrual pollution. He then brought the hair-cloth for the ceremonial bathing as usual on the fourth day, and performed the normal ceremonies, which were attended without unfavourable comment by other Nayars of the village. The girl's elder sister explained that, having failed to obtain a Nayar 'bridegroom' before the menstruation, or to tie the *Idli* herself before a temple god, the mother acted correctly in calling the washerman during pollution, thus saving her daughter from the danger of castration by the caste.

² The employment of a kinswoman of the bridegroom to perform all or part of the marriage rites on his behalf is common in the 'real' marriage ceremonies of many Hindu castes. A Tamil Brahman bridegroom only half ties his wife's *Idli*; his sister stands behind the girl to tie the second half of the knot. Among Travancore Tiyyars, the bridegroom's sisters and mother go to the bride's house without him for the real post-puberty marriage, where the sister recites the formulae on his behalf and later brings home the bride. Sociologically, the part played by a man's kinswoman in his marriage reflects, no doubt, their own interest in the marriage and rights in the bride. But in all the instances we may, from a psychological point of view, interpret the bridegroom's withdrawal in favour of a kinswoman as evidence of his fear to marry, a fear originally engendered by his ritual uncle and dread of paternal vengeance. Alternatively, the bridegroom's unconscious fear of his elder kinsmen's vengeance may be got over in the reverse manner by requiring these elders to absent themselves from the marriage-rite, as in the *ambudham* ceremonies of North Malabar Nayars.

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Nayar
Tiyyar

FEMALE INITIATION RITES ON THE MALABAR COAST

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vehicles, indicate that she is a phallic mother, the 'mother with a penis' who is a common phantasy for European children too. It is well known that in the unconscious minds of Europeans, the phallic mother usually and perhaps always represents the mother armed with the father's penis, which she has acquired in an act of sadistic intercourse. The infant's fear of approaching her sexually thus becomes a fear of being attacked and castrated by the angry penis of the father which the mother has taken as her weapon. In the myths the demon may in each case be interpreted as a son-figure, for in each case he acquires power as a devotee who does penance to Siva, the father-god in the Tamil and Malayalam countries. The son attacks the mother sexually, but she is pre-armed by Siva or by the other gods with their weapons. In some myths she uses their phallic symbol, the sword (a common castration symbol), to behead the demon-son. In the myth of Vanasuran she pierces the demon with the sword and then kills him with her disc. I associate being killed by means of this circular weapon with being castrated by the vagina in intercourse, and the disappearance into the hole with annihilation by being swallowed up in the mother's body, a phantasy which we see too in the fear of being eaten by the mother. Behind this fear may lie an unconscious desire to return to the womb. This interpretation is likely because bathing in the *chaktra-theritham* at Cape Comerin is a means of becoming pure from sin, and purificatory bathing, a common rebirth symbol.

I suggest that the fear of deflowering a virgin issues from this association of her with the phallic mother since, like the mother, she is still in the possession of her lineage kinsmen and defended by their sexual organs, which (in phantasy) they or she may use to castrate or attack an aggressor. We saw how, in the Nayar rite, the lineage men in fact attack the bridegroom with 'phallic' missiles (plantain fruits) and how the ritual play with swords suggests a sexual attack and defence.

A further reason why the *idli* must be tied before puberty may be that the menstruous woman is particularly closely associated with the mother, menstrual blood (see the blood-dripping mouth of Bhadrakali) recalling the infantile phantasy of parental intercourse as a sadistic attack by the father in which the mother is wounded and bleeds, but castrates him and acquires the penis. A virgin who had menstruated but was still in the possession of her lineage kinsmen would thus be too terrifying a creature to deflower. This may be why a woman who matured before the *idli* was tied (i.e. before she was symbolically deflowered and removed from the sexual protection of her kinsmen) was considered irrevocably polluting, a creature to be driven from caste and with whom it would be madness to cohabit. It was therefore desirable to make her attain puberty fictitiously in advance by the mock menstruation ceremony, and then actually or symbolically to deflower her before she was in fact mature. Even so, the bridegroom must be a polluted, low caste person, whose ritual purity could not be further endangered, or a father-figure to the society at large, or a small boy whose act appears innocuous, or a woman on behalf of her son.

My association of the menstruous woman with the phallic, blood-dripping divine mother rests on the fact that, like the goddess, she is 'sacred' and may not be approached; that she is armed with a knife to ward off evil spirits; and that she is credited with the power to make men impotent (castrate them) if they foolhardily copulate with her. It must be noticed too that the obscene songs sung by the washermen at a Nayar or a Tiyyar girl's first menstruation are sung on another occasion, namely the annual Bharani festival to the Bhadrakali of Kodungalur temple in Cochin. In this festival the temple, normally closed to the 'polluting' castes below Nayars, is for seven days flung open to them and deliberately polluted. On the day previous to Bharani, Nayar and low caste pilgrims, drunk with toddy, armed with long staffs, and carrying live cocks, flock in thousands to the temple from all parts of Malabar. On the road they sing obscene songs to the goddess and revile in filthy language women whom they meet.

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2. *Kaimal* (from *kai*, hand, meaning power).—The Kaimals were, according to tradition, the fighting masters of Cochin and Malabar. At one time, they were in charge of the royal treasury, which by respected custom could not be visited by the Rajas themselves, except in the presence of the Kaimals. "Neither could they", says Barbosa, "take anything out of it without a great necessity, and by the council of this person and certain others." They were also the chieftains or rulers of certain localities, owing a kind of allegiance to the ruler of the State. Many of the Kaimal families are still in existence, such as the Koratti Kaimal, Cherukayil Kaimal and others. 533
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3. *Kurup*.—This is also a title attached to the names of many Nayar families and is also assumed by other castes. Some of them were military instructors. (Kalari Kurups) in the old royal families of Cochin and in North Malabar.

4. *Panikkar*.—The word comes from *pani*, meaning work. The Panikkars originally kept *kalaris* (fencing or gymnastic schools with a sort of private chapel attached to it) in Cochin, Malabar and Travancore. They are spoken of by the Portuguese writers as the strength of the country. They are no longer in charge of *kalaris* but are now engaged in other occupations. Some are experts in sword play. [874]

5. *Nayar*.—The Pathináyirathil (10,000) and Muppathináyirathil (30,000) Nayars who constitute the forty thousand belonged to the Kiriya and Chárna castes. The title was generally conferred in Malabar by kings or feudal chiefs, but in the State it was mostly assumed by the Sudrás who had not received other titles.

6. *Menon*.—The word is a contraction of *mél*, above, and *avan*, he, and means a superior person. The title was given to many Nayar families or individuals by the rulers of Cochin. As soon as a person received this title, he was presented with an *óla* (palmyra leaf) and an iron style for writing thereon. This is symbolical of the profession of an accountant. Even now, in Cochin and British Malabar, each *amson* or revenue village has a writer or an accountant who is called a Ménón. The title of *Ménókki* means one who looks over or superintends, and is found only in British [451]

which precede or follow it.¹ Information is then given to the relatives, and friends of the family regarding the performance of the ceremony on a certain date, when invitations are sent around to those that should attend the wedding. The ceremony then opens with a fixing of the post² for the erection of a pandal, which is tastefully decorated and in which the ceremony is performed. The male members of the village are invited and treated to a feast followed by the distribution of betel leaf, arecanuts and tobacco for chewing.³ In the Cochin State, every time the ceremony is performed in a privileged family, or in one wishing to obtain privileges, a member thereof visits His Highness the Raja with presents (*thirumulkāzhcha*), and requests his permission for the celebration. Similar presents are also made to the Nambuthiri *jennies* by their tenants and others attached to the *illams*. It is interesting to note that certain privileges, such as sitting on grass mats, having a procession with an elephant, beating of drums, firing of pop-guns, worshipping of the Sun on a platform especially constructed, have often to be obtained from the ruler of the State.⁴ Then follows the *Ashtamangalyam Vekkal* (procession to the marriage pandal to place the eight auspicious things, namely rice, paddy, tender leaves of cocoanut trees, an arrow, a looking glass, a well washed cloth, lighted fire, and a small wooden box called *cheppu*) which is a formal beginning of the ceremony, or if necessary, earlier still, and for which a *Brihmani* is invited. On the night previous to the ceremony, the girl neatly dressed and adorned in her best is taken by her caste-women to a reserved spot in the house (*Patinnōttu Iruttal*, seating on the western side), where some ceremonies are gone through, and the *Brihmani* or *Pushpini* entertains the party with her songs, chiefly *Purāṇic*. Soon after, the girl and the female members of the family, dressed in gay attire and decked with costly ornaments, come out in procession to the pandal where the

1. The village astrologer is entitled to be formally invited. He makes certain predictions at the sight of the messenger about the results of the marriage. When he arrives at the gate of the house, he is formally received, and he makes certain other predictions from the movement of the flame of a lamp as to the result, happy or otherwise, of the marriage. In the latter case, he suggests some remedies.

2. For this also an auspicious hour is fixed by the astrologer.

3. A few important members sit together and prepare a kind of list for the purchase of provisions for the feast and other expenses.

4. Such privileges are permanently enjoyed by certain aristocratic families. Some obtain them on marriage occasions.

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kalydnam of the Nayers and the marriage ceremony among other Hindus. All available evidence unmistakably points to the conclusion that the former is, in intention, if not in effect, the actual marriage ceremony of the Hindus. The ceremonials in the two cases differ very little; there is, however, one exception, namely, that in the case of Brahmins and others, vedic *mantrams* are recited, while the Nayers are compelled to substitute Brahmani *pattu* (song), which should be uttered in the *Rig védic swaram*. Ever since the institution of this system of marriage in Kerala, these songs have been in existence, and they invoke the blessings of numerous children for the pair. It must also be noted that, among all Brahmins, the wedding ceremony is divided into two parts, namely, the first in which the ceremonials form the chief feature, known as betrothal, and the second, popularly known as consummation or the real marriage. In the case of Nayers and other *marumakkathayam* Hindus, the *tuli* tying ceremony for a girl, which is performed before the first sign of menstruation, refers to the betrothal, and the *sambandham* to the real marriage. There is this important difference that, while the Brahmins perform the ceremony after the selection of a husband and postpone the union of the couple to a future date, the *marumakkathayam* people perform the ceremony first and select the husband on the second occasion, *i. e.*, when the girl is fit to be united to her husband. Hence the bridegroom in the first ceremony acts the part of a vicarious husband. But when the husband is ready at hand, it is not unusual for the girl to be actually married on the occasion of *tuli* tying. The reason for this departure may have been due to the scarcity of suitable young men in the old troublous times and the consequent difficulty of securing a proper husband for every girl before puberty and the danger of girls being out-casted in default of it. Hence it is that the early legislators have devised this convenient plan to allow every girl to be married in a sense with the necessary religious ceremony, and enable her to remain unmarried for life without being subject to excommunication from caste. This view is supported by the fact, that the Nayers were, till towards the close of the eighteenth century, a fighting race and that there was a great loss of lives in the wars with neighbouring principalities and tribes. As in other matters the letter of the law has been closely followed, without a corresponding adherence to its spirit.

881 she bathes with her friends. The same party return home in procession, when the *Brāhmani* entertains the party with her music. In the afternoon, the girl is seated in a pandal put up in front of the house, where the *Vélans* continue the songs, which are *Puranic*, and the assembled guests who are chiefly the women of the village as also those of their friends and relatives present the washerman, each with a piece of cloth. They are entertained at a sumptuous feast held that day; after which the assembled party break up, taking leave of the host. In some places, the girl is taken to a separate house on the fourth day for the bath; whence she returns to her house in procession together with the beating of drum and joyous shouts.

[184] In the northern parts of the State, the *Vélan's* songs are at night, and the performance of the ceremony is compulsory on the fourth day. In the southern Taluks it is often put off to a convenient day, before the completion of which, the girl is prohibited from entering into the kitchen or going to the temple for worship.

585 The second or real marriage is the *Sambandham* (the
Sambandham. customary union of man and woman), which is the principal word denoting the conjugal relations among the Nayars. It is said that there are seven forms of this marriage prevailing in Malabar, of which only two or three are in vogue in the State. The customs connected with each of the latter differ in different places:

[184] [582] nevertheless the main features are the same all over. The best form of *Sambandham* among the Nayars is that between the daughter of a maternal uncle and his nephew; but, as a rule they enjoy very much greater freedom of choice than other

[584] classes of people. The parents or friends of the bride or bride-

[787] groom make the proposal, and the wishes of the *kīranavans* of the two families are invariably consulted after the examination and agreement of their horoscopes. If the parties agree, an auspicious day is fixed in consultation with the astrologer. A few of the caste-men of the village and the friends of the bridegroom meet together in his house, and they all go in a sort of procession to the bride's house where they are properly welcomed and seated in a conspicuous part of the house. A portion of the *Rāmāyanam* or other sacred book, referring to

[533] marriage and the happy conjugal life attending it, is then read by the *Asān* or village school-master. Some music is also

[574] provided for the entertainment of the assembled guests who

are treated to a sumptuous dinner, and at the auspicious hour the bridegroom and his party proceed to a conspicuous part of the house, where a seat is specially provided for him. On either side of the seat and a little in front of it, are placed two lighted lamps. There the bridegroom and the bride make obeisance to the *kāranavans* and other elderly men present there, distribute presents of money to the Brahmins who pronounce their benediction upon the conjugal pair. The bridegroom or his *kāranavans* in the northern parts of the State give her the wedding dress in which she is dressed. The bride is then ushered in, either by her mother or by an elderly member of the family when cloths are given to the bride by the bridegroom. In some places the bridegroom and his party chew betel leaf and nut, while they chat with the women. After a while, the party begins to break up, one by one, wishing the couple all happiness, and the women, departing one by one, leaving the couple alone, one of them closing the door from outside. About daybreak, next morning, the bridegroom departs from the house, leaving under the pillow a sum of money according to his means. The *sambandham* is now complete. The woman resides in her family, and her husband visits her there. A few days after this, the bridegroom's mother or some senior woman of his family sends some cloths including *pīcu mundus* (superior cloths) and *thōrtha mundus* (towels) and also some gingelly oil for her use during the next six months. Every six months, she does the same, and on the festivals of *Onam*, *Vishu* and *Thiruvōthira* she is given a little money, arecanut, betel, tobacco and banana. Before long the women of the bridegroom's family express their wish to see her, and have her brought to their family by a few women of the former. She stays there for a few days and is sent back to her own house with presents of ornaments and clothes from senior women of the house. After this she is at liberty to visit her husband's house on any day, auspicious or inauspicious.

In the Chittur and Talapilly Taluks of the State as also in the Palghat Taluk of South Malabar, this form of marriage is called *Kidakkōra* or *Kidakka kalyānam* (the bed chamber ceremony). As part of this ceremony, a declaration is made by one of the bridegroom's party to the senior female of the bride's house in the presence of the assembled guests in the following terms:— " Let this youth visit this damsel for

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intermittently blown. Such are the crude theatrical properties which the actor has to face.

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At about eight o'clock begins the *Thodayam purapad*, consisting of songs which are meant to initiate the audience into the mysteries of the plot. But this takes place behind the drop curtain, which has not yet been drawn up. Next comes the *Vandanaslókam*—a song in propitiation of some particular god—and then begins the play. The actors perform only by means of dumb-show, and the music is provided by the singers who, though invisible, are close at hand. All changes of thought, feelings, and emotions are conveyed by means of gestures of which there are said to be sixty-four different kinds, and in the commingling of these, lies the skill of the actor. Inhuman and unchivalrous acts, such as chopping off the noses and breasts of women, are usually enacted behind the scenes; though, in certain cases, these are made realistic by the characters to be victimised wearing false noses and breasts.

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It is not until the dawn of day that the play ends. The cost of a night's performance is only about fifteen rupees, while the cost of all the stock in trade is often less than 400 rupees.

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A special innovation in this direction was made by the Valia Kovil Tampurán of Travancore and others who translated a few of the most important Sanskrit dramas. They introduced a real improvement in the construction of the stage and scenery, as also in the mode of dress, the style of music, and the method of acting, all of which were changes for the better. Dramatic companies were organised in many places where the plays were acted. They were at first very popular, but most of them disappeared as they did not play; but yet poets and versifiers still continue their work of producing plays for the stage.

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Mohiniyattam.—This is an institution, very much like the nautch of the East Coast. A leader (*Nettuvan*) obtains the service of two or three young girls of low birth and trains them for the performance. He takes the girls from house to house, gets a paltry allowance for each day's performance, and thus makes a living. The performance is usually acted at night, when the girls, dressed in the gaudy attire, are led by

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the *Nettuvan* in an amorous dance. This is an abominable institution, and the women who are thus rented out are looked

upon with contempt. It must be noted that they live separately, having little or nothing in common with the other classes, and that the institution is dying a silent and natural death. 536
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Songs.—There have been very many songs current among the Nayers even from a very remote period; and they are chiefly composed and sung in honour of deities, and are mostly prayers addressed to them. A translation of these is not here attempted, for they lose much of their beauty, but the following, however, are the most important of them :— 533
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Bhadrakali Pattu :—These are songs which are sung in honour of Káli, and are supposed to have been composed by the Sudras of Palghat long before the Malayalam era. Certain dramatic songs also appear to have been composed about the same time, and refer to the deities on the hills as well as to the kings of the period. They are sung in towns and villages, between Anamala and Trichur in the east, and the Walayar forests on the other side. The ancient name of these localities was Cheranad, and it was the first place to be occupied by people, when Kerala was a marshy tract. As evidence of this, remains of houses are still to be seen at the foot of the hills. In a place of such historic importance were composed and sung these songs, which are so full of the ideas of the Vedānta and Yoga philosophies, and which give a clue to the nature of the people who once lived there. There is also another variety of songs referring to *Dárikavadham*, (murder of the demon Dárikan), and they are sung by a class of men called the *Kurippans*. There are also other old songs such as the *Sásta pattu* (songs in honour of Sásta). [193]
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Ganapati pattu (songs in honour of Ganapati) and serpent songs :—Among the old songs, those referring to agriculture, and composed during the third century of the Malayalam era, occupy a prominent place, and the agriculturists of the northern parts of the State even to-day follow the precepts laid down in these songs. But excepting, the song commemorating the deeds of *Meppayil Kunji Othenan*, the Robinhood of North Malabar, there are no songs which sing of the deeds of brave men.

The chief festivals.—(1). *Onam* :—This is an important national festival, which falls in the second half of August or the first half of September, and is celebrated in commemoration of Mahábali, an *Asura* king, whose reign is believed 796
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[796] stick, it is possible to produce a kind of musical tone, for
 [534] which a party is organised to play on it. This entertainment is much admired, and interests the people very much.

(2). *Tiruvdtira* :—This is another important national festival, which falls on the *Tiruvdtira* day in Dhanu (December-
 [776] January). This concerns the Nayar women, and is said to commemorate the death of *Kāma Déva*, the cupid of Indian mythology, by the burning fire of the third eye of the God
 • [533] Siva. Before day-break the festive day, the young women of the Nayar families hasten to the nearest tank or river for bathing, and during the bath, they amuse themselves with *Tiruvdtira pitta*, songs accompanied by regular splashing of water, supposed to be symbolical of beating of the breast, on account of their grief for Kama's death. At day-break, they return home, and, gaily dressed and adorned, they
 [526] go to the nearest temple for worship. After a slight breakfast, they proceed to enjoy the *Uzhinjal* (a swinging apparatus made of bamboo and attached to a horizontal branch of a tree).
 [264] Immense pleasure is taken in this game. The family dinner
 [262] is at noon, when bananas, sliced and fried in cocoanut-oil, seasoned with salt, are freely distributed among the friends and
 [431] relatives assembled there. Ripe plantains, and the sweet preparation of arrow-root flour purified and seasoned with jaggery
 [263] or sugar and cocoanuts, also form one of the chief items of the feast.

[804] (3). *Vishu* :—Next in importance to the two great national
 [777] festivals just described, comes *Vishu* on the first of Medam (March-April), which is the astronomical new year's day; and a man's prosperity during the year is believed to depend on his seeing some good and lucky thing on the *Vishu* morning. It is the custom to prepare on the night previous, what is known as *Kani*. A bell-metal vessel (*urnli*) is taken, and in it are arranged a *grantha* or cadjan manuscript, a gold ornament, a new washed cloth, some flowers of the *konna* tree (*Cassia fistula*), some coins in a silver cup, a cocoanut cut into two, a cucumber, some mangoes, and a jack-fruit. On either side of the vessel, are also placed two lamps burning, while there is a plank of wood or some other seat placed in front of it. These are placed in the chief room inside the house, and in the morning, the members of the family, one by one, are taken to the

of the same caste, then decorates the girl by putting [613]
 on anklets, etc. The purōhit (officiating priest) called [564]
 Elayath (a low class of Brāhmans) then gives the tāli [793]
 to the Mānavālan, and 'the family astrologer shouts [787]
 muhurtham (auspicious hour), and the Manavālan,
 putting his sword on the lap, ties the tāli round the
 neck of the girl, who is then required to hold an
 arrow and a looking-glass in her hand. In rich families [556]
 a Brāhmani sings certain songs intended to bless the [533]
 couple. In ordinary families who cannot procure her
 presence, a Nāyar, versed in songs, performs the office.
 The boy and girl are then carried by enangans to [783]
 a decorated apartment in the inner part of the house,
 where they are required to remain under a sort of pollu-
 tion for three days. On the fourth day they bathe in
 some neighbouring tank (pond) or river, holding each
 other's hands. After changing their clothes they come
 home, preceded by a procession. Tom-toms (native [534]
 drums) and elephants usually form part of the proces- [231]
 sion, and turmeric water is sprinkled. When they come
 home, all doors of the house are shut, and the Manavālan is
 required to force them open. He then enters the house,
 and takes his seat in the northern wing thereof. The aunt
 and female friends of the girl then approach, and give
 sweetmeats to the couple. The girl then serves food to the [264]
 boy, and, after taking their meal together from the same
 leaf, they proceed to the booth, where a cloth is severed
 into two parts, and each part given to the Manavālan
 and girl separately in the presence of enangans and
 friends. The severing of the cloth is supposed to [586]
 constitute a divorce." "The tearing of the cloth," [184]
 Mr. Fawcett writes, "is confined to South Malabar.
 These are the essentials of the ceremony, an adjunct to [765]
 which is that, in spite of the divorce, the girl observes

consider a coral necklace an essential. In her right hand she holds a vālkannādi (brass hand mirror), and in her left a charakkal (a highly ornate arrow). In front of the girl are placed, in addition to the five-wicked lamp and nirachaveppu, a metal dish or talam of parched rice, and the eight lucky things known as ashtaman-galyam. A woman, termed Brahmini or Pushpini, usually of the Nambissan caste, sits facing her on a three-legged stool (pidam), and renders appropriate and lengthy songs, at the close of which she scatters rice over her. About midday there is a feast, and in the evening songs in the macchu are repeated. Next morning the ceremonial in the macchu is repeated for the third time, after which the paraphernalia are removed to the nearest tank or to the east of the household well, where the Pushpini sings once more, goes through the form of making the girl's toilet, and ties a cocoanut frond round each of her wrists (kappōla). The girl has then to rise and jump over a kindi (vessel) of water with an unhusked cocoanut placed on the top, overturning it the third time. The party then proceed to the pandal, two men holding a scarlet cloth over the girl as a canopy, and a Chāliyan (weaver) brings two cloths (kōdi vastiram), which the girl puts on. In the evening, the previous day's ceremonial is repeated in the macchu. The third day is the most important, and it is then that the central act of the ceremony is performed. For this the girl sits in the inner pandal richly adorned. In some cases she is carried from the house to the pandal by her karnavan or brother, who makes a number of pradakshinams round the pandal (usually 3 or 7) before he places her in her seat. Before the girl are the various objects already specified, and the hymeneal ditties of the Pushpini open the proceedings. At the auspicious moment the

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184 Manavālan arrives in rich attire. He is often preceded by a sort of body guard with sword and shield who utter a curious kind of cry, and is met at the gate of the girl's house by a bevy of matrons with lamps and salvers decorated with flowers and lights, called talams. A man of the girl's family washes his feet, and he takes his seat in the pandal on the girl's right. Sometimes the girl's father at this stage presents new cloths (mantravādi or mantrokōdi) to the pair, who at once don them. The girl's father takes the tāli, a small round plate of gold about the size of a two-anna bit, with a hole at the top, from the goldsmith who is in waiting, pays him for it, [787] and gives it to the Manavālan. The karnavan or father of the girl asks the astrologer thrice if the moment has arrived, and, as he signifies his assent the third time, the Manavālan ties the tāli round the girl's neck amidst the shouts of those present. The Manavālan carries the girl indoors to the macchu, and feasting brings the day to
- [533] a close. Tom-toming and other music are of course incessant accompaniments throughout as on other festal occasions, and the women in attendance keep up a curious kind of whistling, called kurava, beating their lips with their fingers. On the fourth day, girl and Manavālan go in procession to the temple richly dressed. The boy, carrying some sort of sword and shield, heads [782] the party. If the family be one of position, he and the girl must be mounted on an elephant. Offerings are made to the deity, and presents to the Brāhmins. They then return home, and, as they enter the house, the Manavālan who brings up the rear is pelted by the boys of the party with plantains, which he wards off with his shield. In other cases, he is expected to make a pretence of forcing the door open. These two usages are no doubt to be classed with those marriage ceremonies which take the

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astrologer, and those youths in the tarwads who have passed the age of eighteen, and whose horoscopes agree with those of the girls, are declared to be eligible. The ola (palm-leaf) on which the Kaniyan (astrologer) writes his decision is called the muhurta charutu, and the individual who receives it from him is obliged to see that the ceremony is performed on an auspicious day in the near future. The next important item is the fixing of a wooden post in the south-west corner or kannimula of the courtyard. At the construction of the pandal (booth) the Pidakakkar or villagers render substantial aid. The mandapa is decorated with ears of corn, and hence called katirmandapa. It is also called mullapandal. On the night of the previous day the kalati or Brāhman's song is sung. A sumptuous banquet, called ayaniunnu, is given at the girl's house to the party of the young man. The ceremony commences with the bridegroom washing his feet, and taking his seat within the pandal. The girl meanwhile bathes, worships the household deity, and is dressed in new cloths and adorned with costly ornaments. A Brāhman woman ties a thread round the girl's left wrist, and sings a song called Subhadraveli, which deals with the marriage by capture of Subhadra by Arjuna. Then, on the invitation of the girl's mother, who throws a garland round his neck, the bridegroom goes in procession, riding on an elephant, or on foot. The girl's brother is waiting to receive him at the pandal. A leading villager is presented with some money, as if to recompense him for the permission granted by him to commence the ceremony. The girl sits within the mandapa, facing the east, with her eyes closed. The bridegroom, on his arrival, sits on her right. He then receives the minnu (ornament) from the Ilayatu priest, and ties it round the girl's neck. A song is sung called

A song is sung called ammachampattu, or the song of the maternal uncle. If ⁵⁸⁸ there are several brides, they sit in a row, each holding ¹⁸⁴ in her hand an arrow and a looking-glass, and the [533] ornaments are tied on their necks in the order of their ages. Unless enangans are employed, there is usually only one tali-tier, whatever may be the number of girls. In cases where, owing to poverty, the expenses of the ceremony cannot be borne, it is simply performed in front of a Brāhman temple, or in the pandaramatam, or house of the village chieftain. In many North Travancore taluks the girl removes her tali as soon as she hears of the tali-tier's death." It is noted by the Rev. S. Matcer * that " a Nair girl of Travancore must get married with the tali before the age of eleven to avoid reproach from friends and neighbours. In case of need a sword may even be made to represent a bridegroom." Sometimes, when a family is poor, the girl's mother makes an idol of clay, adorns it with flowers, and invests her daughter with the tali in the presence of the idol.

In an account of the tali-kettu ceremony, in the Cochin Census Report, 1901, it is stated that " the celebration of the ceremony is costly, and advantage is therefore taken of a single occasion in the course of ten or twelve years, at which all girls in a family, irrespective of their ages, and, when parties agree, all girls belonging to families that observe death pollution between one another go through the ceremony. The ceremony opens with the fixing of a post for the construction of a pandal or shed, which is beautifully decorated with cloth, pictures and festoons. The male members of the village are [574] invited, and treated to a feast followed by the distribution

* Journ. Anthropol. Inst., XII, 1883.

(shouts of joy by females). The females of the 88
neighbouring houses, and of the families of friends and
relatives, visit her. New cloths are presented to the girl
by her near relatives. On the third day the villagers,
friends and relatives are treated to a luncheon of rice and
milk pudding. Early in the morning on the fourth day,
the Mannans or Vēlans appear. The girl is anointed
with oil, and tender leaves of the cocoanut palm are tied
round the head and waist. In the company of maidens [533]
she is brought out of the room, and the Vēlans sing
certain songs. Thence the party move on to the tank,
where the girl wears a cloth washed by a Vēlan, and
takes a bath. After the bath the Vēlans again sing [533]
songs. In the afternoon, the girl is taken out by [574]
the females invited for the occasion to an ornamental [431]
pandal, and the Vēlans, standing at a distance, once more
sing. With the usual distribution of pān-supāri, sandal
and jasmine flowers, the ceremony closes. In the midst
of the song, the female guests of the village, the wives
of friends and relatives, and most of the members of
the family itself, present each a small cloth to the
Vēlans. They are also given a small amount of money,
rice, betel leaf, etc. The guests are then entertained at [574]
a feast. In some places, the girl is taken to a separate
house for the bath on the fourth day, whence she returns
to her house in procession, accompanied by tom-toms
and shouting. In the northern tāluks, the Vēlan's song [533]
is in the night, and the performance of the ceremony [184]
on the fourth day is compulsory. In the southern tāluks,
it is often put off to some convenient day. Before the
completion of this song ceremony, the girl is prohibited
from going out of the house or entering temples."

It is provided, by the Malabar Marriage Act, 1896, that, 575
" when a sambandham has been registered in the manner 217

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[533] The accuracy with which they were played on, never a wrong note although the rhythm was changed perpetually, was truly amazing. And the crescendo and diminuendo, from a perfect fury of wildness to the gentlest pianissimo, was equally astonishing, especially when we consider the fact that there was no visible leader of this strange orchestra. Early on, the seventh and last day, when the morning procession is over, there comes to the temple a man of the Pānan caste (umbrella-makers and devil-dancers). He carries a small cadjan umbrella which he has made himself, adorned all round the edges with a fringe of the young leaves of the cocoanut palm. His approach is heralded and noised just as in the case of the others on the previous day. The umbrella should have a long handle, and, with it in his hand, he performs a dance before the temple. The temple is situated within a hollow square enclosure, which none in caste below the Nāyar is permitted to enter. To the north, south, east, and west, there is a level entrance into the hollow square, and beyond this entrance no man of inferior caste may go. The Pānan receives about 10 lbs. of raw rice for his performance. In the afternoon, a small crowd of Vettuvans come to the temple, carrying with them swords, and about ten small baskets made of cocoanut palm leaves, containing salt. These baskets are carried slung on a pole. The use of salt here is obscure.* I remember a case of a Nāyar's house having been plundered, the idol knocked down, and salt put in the place where it should have stood. The act was looked on as most insulting. The Vettuvans dance and shout in much excitement, cutting their heads with their own swords in their frenzy. Some

* The Vettuvans were once salt-makers.

is supremely secret. Equally so is that which follows. 789
 The carcass of one goat will be taken out of the temple 782
 by the northern door to the north side of the temple, 793
 and from this place one of the temple servants, who is
 blindfolded, drags it three times round the temple, the
 Müssads following closely, repeating their mantrams, the
 drummer in front beating his drum softly with his fingers.
 The drummer dare not look behind him, and does not know [534]
 what is being done. After the third round, the drummer
 and the temple servant go away, and the three Müssads
 cook some of the flesh of the goats and one or two of
 the cocks (or a part of one) with rice. This rice, when
 cooked, is taken to the kâvu (grove) to the north of the
 temple, and there the Müssads again ply their mantrams.
 As each mantram is ended, a handful of saffron (turmeric) [533]
 powder is flung on the rice, and all the time the drummer,
 who by this time has returned, keeps up an obligato
 pianissimo with his drum, using his fingers. He faces
 the north, and the priests face the south. Presently the
 priests run (not walk) once round the temple, carrying
 the cooked rice, and scattering it wide as they go, repeat-
 ing mantrams. They enter the temple, and remain
 within until daybreak. No one can leave the temple
 until morning comes. Before daybreak, the temple is
 thoroughly swept and cleaned, and then the Müssads go
 out, and the five Nambûtiris again enter before sunrise,
 and perform the ordinary worship thrice in the day, for
 this day only. The next morning, the Müssad priests
 return and resume their duties. Beyond noting that the 796
 weirdness of the human tumult, busy in its religious 564
 effusion, is on the last night enhanced by fireworks, [541]
 mere description of the scene of the festival will not be
 attempted, and such charming adjuncts of it as the
 gallery of pretty Nayar women looking on from the

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lest their extreme sanctity might increase the powers of the goddess to a dangerous extent. Poojahs are daily offered to her. An annual festival known as the Bharani, connected with this goddess, plays a most important part in the religious history of Malabar. It comes off in the Malayalam month of Meenam (about March or April). Pilgrimages undertaken to the temple on this occasion are potent enough to safeguard the pilgrims, and their friends and relations, from the perilous attacks of cholera and small-pox. Hence people resort thither annually by thousands from almost all parts of Malabar; and, the more north you go, the stronger will you find the hold which the goddess has upon the popular imagination. The chief propitiatory offering on the occasion is the sacrifice of cocks. In fact, every family makes a point of undertaking this sacred mission. People arrange to start on it at an auspicious moment, on a fixed day in small isolated bodies. Preparations are made for the journey. Rice, salt, chillies, curry-stuffs, betel leaves and nuts, a little turmeric powder and pepper, and, above all, a number of cocks form an almost complete paraphernalia of the pilgrimage. These are all gathered and preserved in separate bundles inside a large bag. When the appointed hour comes, they throw this bag on their shoulders, conceal their money in their girdles, and, with a native-fashioned umbrella in the one hand and a walking-stick in the other, they start, each from his own house, to meet the brother pilgrims at the rendezvous. Here a foreman is selected practically by common consent. Then commences the vociferous recitation of that series of obscene songs and ballads, which characterises the pilgrimage all along. The foreman it is that opens the ball. He is caught up by others